

# BBC UPDATE

## *BBTS Is Now Available On-Line!*

Dr. Thomas Strouse



Bible Baptist Church is pleased to announce, by the grace of God, that Bible Baptist Theological Seminary spring semester courses are now online at the church's web site [www.bbc-cromwell.org](http://www.bbc-cromwell.org). Viewers may register as seminarians or guests. Those desiring to apply the courses for credit towards the Master of Biblical Studies (MBS) or Master of Divinity (MDiv) will have to submit an application with a one-time fee of \$30.00 and pay \$300.00 per course. One-half of the MBS requirements may be taken via online courses, *Dr. Thomas Strouse* and the remaining one-half through various modules in the USA and abroad. Syllabi and class handouts are available electronically. Already, seminarians from several different countries have registered. Pray for this endeavor to propagate biblical truths such as ecclesiology and bibliology to a theologically anemic Christianity worldwide.



**BBTS Online**

[Click here for online classes](#)

### Article

## *The Influence of Gnosticism on the Patristics*

### Introduction

The Apostle Paul gave the scriptural defense against Greek philosophy and the Gnostic heresy of the first century (Col. 2:9-11), as he refuted Plato's Gnostic teaching concerning the fulness (πλήρωμα). Understanding Paul's exposition of truth about the πλήρωμα will help one understand how wide-spread Platonic Gnosticism was in the first century of New Testament Christianity, and how easily the un-regenerated church fathers (Patristics) "platonized" Christian doctrine. These erroneous notions appear in the textual tampering represented by the Critical Text (CT), in the promotion of a Gnostic Christ as refuted by the Apostle John (I Jn. 2:22; 4:1-3), in the perversion of the meaning, mode, and timing of biblical baptism, and in the universal, invisible church heresy. The Lies of the Garden (Gen. 3:4-5) manifested in Greek philosophy and especially through Plato, which in turn influenced the un-regenerate Apostolic church fathers who were foundational to the errors of Catholicism, which errors the Protestants attempted to reform in modified forms. This Platonic Gnosticism rears its diabolical head in Baptist churches, as platonized and protestantized Baptists perpetuate the Gnostic-laced CT and resultant translations, and/or promote admittedly, a "Platonic," "universal," "invisible," "true," "ideal," "mystical body of Christ" church.

### *I. Pleroma (πλήρωμα) and the New Testament*

A. The Greek word πλήρωμα occurs 17x in the NT. It refers to "that which is full" or "that which fills." The cognate verb πληρώω occurs 90x and means "to fill."

#### B. Significant passages:

1. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) **full of grace and truth**" (Jn. 1:14). The incarnate Lord Jesus was and is the embodiment of divine grace and truth.
2. "And of his **fulness** have all we received, and grace for grace" (Jn. 1:16). John affirmed that the Apostles and presumably all believers have received the divine pleroma upon receiving the Saviour (Jn. 1:12).

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3. "Which is his body, the **fulness** of him that **fillesh** all in all" (Eph. 1:23). The incarnate and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ fills His body (i.e., local church) with His *pleroma*.
4. "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be **filled** with all the **fulness** of God" (Eph. 3:19). Regenerated church members have the expectation to be filled with the divine glories and communicable attributes of God, having the Triune Godhead dwelling within.
  - a. "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the **fulness** of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Saved church members must grow in the divine perfections as Peter implored (II Pet. 1:4-8).
5. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all **fulness** dwell" (Col. 1:19). Christ was and is the complete composite of all the perfections, attributes, and characteristics of God the Father.
6. "For in him dwelleth all the **fulness** of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). Again, for reemphasis, Paul declared that the Lord Jesus Christ was indeed, "God was manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16).
  - a. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Col. 2:8). Paul warned the Colossian church members about Greek philosophy and demonic doctrines.
  - b. "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10). He clearly testified that Christ alone is the *pleroma*, the Christian is complete in the Lord and does not need to advance up the *pleroma*, and Christ is actually and believers are positionally above all angelic (demonic) beings.

## II. The Lies of the Garden

- A. "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). Satan through the serpent denied God's prediction and offered the opposite teaching—no death. Deathlessness to man was the promise.
- B. "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). Couched in the term knowing (עָרַף, γινώσκω),<sup>1</sup> Satan claimed deification for Adam and Eve. Deification to man was the promise.
  1. Corollaries to this include no salvation for the body or flesh—flesh is evil.<sup>2</sup>
  2. Furthermore, the resurrection of the body is denied.
- C. Satan's alternative theological system was not Theism, but Pantheistic (known also as "catholicity") in scope, Gnostic in nature, and Antichristian in conflict.
- D. Therefore, it is predicted that his religions, cults, and philosophies would be re-packaged historically and religiously with an emphasis on deification of all, reincarnation of man, denigration of the material world, works salvation in this life, and some sort of purging advancement after physical death. The word "God" would refer exclusively to the non-material realm as "abstract existence," "divine thought," ideas, energy, "Over-soul," mind, the endless all, the ideal, etc.
- E. All ancient and modern religions, cults, and pagan philosophies teach more or less obliquely the following satanic tenets:
  1. Deity is housed in the flesh for some reason.

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<sup>1</sup>The term Gnosticism comes from γινώσκω and refers to religious or special knowledge. Satanic Gnosticism has been around since the Garden, but many want to use the term as a technical expression for the AD second century fully-blossomed Gnosticism.

<sup>2</sup>Lucifer, as a created spirit being, apparently was not interested in salvation of the material body (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezk. 28:12-17).

2. Deity needs to escape the flesh of man through purging of "sin" and "evil" in this life and through reincarnation.
3. "True" reality is in the spiritual universal mind.
4. The fullness (πλήρωμα) of the real existence of deity, or the archetypal ideal existing in the invisible heavens, has emanations down to the imperfect phenomenal manifestations of that ideal locked in the material world through aeons, angels, or other intermediaries, who help the spark of divinity housed in evil flesh back to Godhood through the πλήρωμα.
5. Pseudo-Christian religions teach that Jesus Christ is spiritual but not in the flesh (Docetism), or that Jesus is a mere man in physical body but not the divine Christ (Adoptionism).

### III. Greek Philosophy and Christianity

- A. The Hellenization of Alexander the Great influenced the Roman world in Greek language and Greek philosophical thought (Platonism).
  1. "It is therefore the more remarkable that within a century and a half after Christianity and philosophy first came into close contact, the ideas and methods of philosophy had flowed in such mass into Christianity, and filled so large a place in it, as to have made it no less a philosophy than a religion."<sup>3</sup>
  2. "Christianity was but a misunderstood Platonism. Whatever in it was true had been better expressed before."<sup>4</sup>
- B. The Hellenized Patristics failed to distinguish between Greek philosophy and biblical revelation.
  1. "'We teach the same as the Greeks,' says Justin Martyr, 'though we alone are hated for what we teach.' 'Some of our number,' says Tertullian, 'who are versed in ancient literature, have composed books by means of which it may be clearly seen that we have embraced nothing new or monstrous, nothing in which we have not the support of common and public literature.' 'The teachings of Plato,' says Justin Martyr, 'are not alien to those of Christ, though not in all respects similar...For all the writers [of antiquity] were able to have a dim vision of realities by means of the indwelling seed of the implanted Word.'"<sup>5</sup>
  2. "The more philosophical Gnostics also passed one by one outside the Christian lines. Their ideas gradually lost their Christian colour...the logical development of the thoughts of Basilides and Justin, of Valentinus and the Naassenes, is to be found in Neo-Platonism—that splendid vision of incomparable and irrecoverable cloudland in which the sun of Greek philosophy set."<sup>6</sup>
- C. The platonized Patristics perpetuated the pagan practice of works salvation, having succumbed to the Galatian heresy of the accursed Gospel of works (circumcision required for salvation among Gentiles) as expressed in Gal. 1:2-10; Acts 15:1 ff.). After AD 70, salvation by circumcision changed to salvation by baptism.
  1. In time they changed the name for baptism, as "enlightenment" (φωτισμός), "seal" (σφραγίς), and "mystery" (μυστήριον), coming from the current Gnostic Mystery religions.<sup>7</sup>
  2. Later, the time for baptism changed, postponing it until much later in the convert's life. Hatch argues, "...to show conclusively that the change was due to the influence of the mysteries,

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<sup>3</sup>Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publ., 1995 reprint), p. 125.

<sup>4</sup>Hatch, pp. 127-128

<sup>5</sup>Hatch pp. 125-126

<sup>6</sup>Hatch, pp. 132-133

<sup>7</sup>Hatch, pp. 295-296

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baptized persons were, as we have seen, distinguished from unbaptized by the very term which was in use for the similar distinction in regard to the mysteries—initiated and uninitiated...<sup>8</sup>

#### D. Platonic philosophy was Gnostic.

1. "The chief philosophical expression of Dualism was Platonism. Plato followed Anaxagoras in believing that mind is separate from matter and acts upon it: he went beyond him in founding upon this separation a universal distinction between the real and the phenomenal, and between God and the world...the creative energy of God is spoken of as the Demiurgus, who himself made an ideal world..."<sup>9</sup>
2. "These unbodied Forces, which are here called by the Platonic name of Forms, are elsewhere spoken of in Stoical language as Reasons, sometimes in Pythagorean language as Numbers or limits, sometimes in the language of the Old Testament as Angels, and sometimes in the language of popular mythology as Daemons."<sup>10</sup>

#### IV. Platonic Philosophy

- A. Plato (427-347 BC) was the understudy of Socrates (470-399 BC) and the teacher of Aristotle (384-322 BC). He wrote the 36 dialogues and 13 letters, including the following works: *Euthyphro*, *Apology of Socrates*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Parmenides*, *Philebus*, and *Symposium*.
- B. He ushered in Greek philosophy (and later neo-Platonism) and influenced the world of the New Testament era and the specifically the Apostolic Fathers and subsequent Patristics.
  1. "The contact between the Greek and the Hebrew worlds created a new problem, that of explaining and justifying the Hebraic religious view, and later the Christian outlook, in terms that would make sense to those who did not accept either the Old or New Testament picture of the world. As St. Paul discovered, the message of Christianity sounded like nonsense to the Greek philosophers. When he spoke to them at Athens, they ridiculed him. Jewish and Christian thinkers began to try to state their religious beliefs in terms that would be reasonable to someone schooled in Greek philosophy. They attempted to show that the assertions of their religion were justified on the standards employed by the Greek philosophers. Philo Judaeus, of the first century A.D., and the early Church Fathers Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-220) and Origen (A.D. 185-254) argued that the religion of the Bible was compatible with Platonic philosophy. They contended that philosophical reasons could be given for accepting certain religious views, and that various religious contentions could be interpreted as ways of stating philosophical theses. Over the next several centuries, many theories from the writing of the Greek philosophers were employed by theologians to clarify or justify their religious convictions. Proofs of the existence of God, and theories about His Nature were set forth to provide a rational justification for the religious knowledge-claims of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and of the Mohammedan religion."<sup>11</sup>
  2. "Plato's thoughts on God, which are among the most difficult to comprehend, found their way into both the Christian religion and Western philosophy. This could not take place however,

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<sup>8</sup>Hatch, pp. 295-296. Once the biblical name and timing of baptism was changed, the time of baptism was moved from being deferred to advance years of the candidate, to immediacy in the case of infirm infants. Later, the biblical mode was changed from immersion to pouring or sprinkling water, as the Roman Catholic Church rejected the scriptural practice of baptizing professed believers subsequent to their conversion and substituted pedobaptism for salvation.

<sup>9</sup>Hatch, pp. 177-179

<sup>10</sup>Hatch, pp. 185-186.

<sup>11</sup>Avrum Stroll and Richard H. Popkin, *Introduction to Philosophy*, third edition (NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), p. 342.

until the *Idea of the Good* of Plato had been transformed into the *One* of the neo-Platonists and adapted to the Christian religion by St. Augustine, Origen, Dionysius the Areopagite, John the Scot, and other key figures of the Christian Church”<sup>12</sup>

3. Since he had founded the Academy of Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the western world, the philosophical thought of the Greco-Roman world into which Christianity came was platonic. The un-regenerated Patristics therefore seemly attempted to Platonize Paul.
4. Even today, theologians argue that Paul and Plato agreed on certain subjects. For instance, Millard Erickson stated, saying, “At this point some people might accuse theologians of adopting a Platonic perspective whereby local churches are regarded as instantiations or concrete particular manifestations of the pure Form, the abstract Idea, of church. Note, however, that theologians are not reading this concept into the Bible. The concept is actually present in the thought of Paul and Luke; it is not introduced by their interpreters. There is on this one point a genuine parallel between biblical thought and that of Plato. This is neither good or bad, and should not be considered an indication of Platonic influence upon the Bible. It is simply a fact.”<sup>13</sup>  
[to be continued]

<sup>12</sup>Max Fishler, *What the Great Philosophers Thought About God* (Los Angeles: University Book Publishers, 1958), p. 19.

<sup>13</sup>Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), p. 1033.

## 2014 BBTS Spring Semester Class Schedule

### Mondays

|                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Greek I</i>           | 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM |
| <i>Greek II</i>          | 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM |
| <i>Greek Proficiency</i> | 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM   |
| <i>Hebrew VIII</i>       | 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM   |

### Wednesdays

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>1 &amp; 2 Peter</i> | 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM |
|------------------------|--------------------|

### Thursdays

|                                      |                   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>History of Christian Doctrine</i> | 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|

### Fridays

|                                   |                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>New Testament Introduction</i> | 9:00 AM - Noon |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|

### BBTS On-line

BBTS Classes are now available for viewing at <http://www.bbc-cromwell.org/seminary.shtml>

## BBTS Spring Schedule

January 27, 2014

BBTS Fall Semester Begins

March 10-14, 2014

HBTS Modules - Endicott, NY

“I and II Peter” (TMS)

“Hebrew” (JWS)

April 18, 2014

BBTS Spring Lecture Series

“The Book of Revelation”

BBTS Graduation

May 18, 2014, 1:30 PM

See [www.bbc-cromwell.org](http://www.bbc-cromwell.org) for more information



# DEVOTIONAL CORNER

## Acting Biblically Correct



Pastor Cas Reeves

*"Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you"* (Deuteronomy 4:1-2).

Our text is a promise from God to the nation of Israel, his people. They were to take heed and do the statutes and judgments which the LORD God had given them. Three things were promised: 1) They would survive as a nation from the upcoming conflicts with nations greater than themselves. 2) They would go into the land God had promised their fathers, finally after thirty-eight years. And 3) They would possess the land given to them by God.

The condition to the fulfilling of this promise was their unquestioned obedience. The focal point of this obedience was the *"word which I command you."* Jesus taught what this obedience represented when he said, *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him"* (John 14:21). Just like God's promise to Israel, if we want the blessings of the fulfilling of God's promises in our life, we must demonstrate our love for Christ. This is shown by our obedience, in turn, we then see the manifestation of Christ in our life.

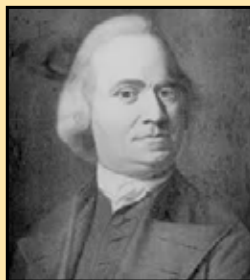
Also, we note, that obedience was to be God's way, and that way meant complete obedience. *"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it"* (Deut.4:2). Likewise, we are not to take away or add to what the Lord Jesus said, but to obey exactly every word and command. This is biblically correct. And for us, the rewards are the fulfilling of God's promises and the manifestation of Christ in our lives. CAR

### Quotes From the Past:

#### Samuel Adams, 1722-1803

Founding Father, "Father of the American Revolution"

*"Neither the wisest constitution nor the wisest laws will secure the liberty and happiness of a people whose manners are universally corrupt."*



Samuel Adams

### Save the Date!!

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Lecture Series "The Book of Revelation"

Friday, April 18th  
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM



## LADIES MEETING

The Fourth Annual BBC

# Ladies' Fellowship & Tea

Saturday,  
March 8, 2014

*Let your light so shine before men,  
that they may see your good works,  
and glorify your Father which is in  
heaven. Matthew 5:16*

Ladies Meeting

7

Announcement



MRS. PATTY HERR,  
GUEST SPEAKER

*You are invited to join the Ladies of Bible Baptist Church as they host Fourth Annual Ladies' Fellowship & Tea from 10 AM to 1 PM.*

*Mrs. Patty Herr, wife of Pastor Daniel Herr (Chester Baptist Church, Chester, MA) will share her testimony. The fellowship will include congregational singing, special music, testimonies, and a brunch.*

*Please RSVP with the number of Ladies attending by March 1 to [drtms\\_bbts@juno.com](mailto:drtms_bbts@juno.com)*

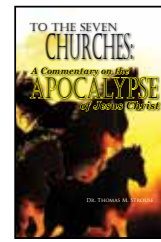


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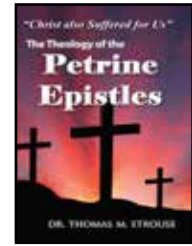
# THE BOOK CORNER

## The Book Corner

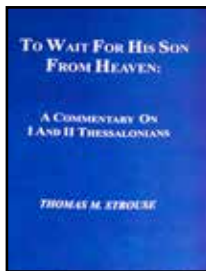
These Books may be purchased through **Bible Baptist Church**:  
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Cromwell, CT 06416  
860-229-5387



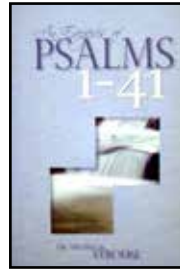
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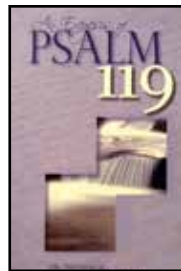
Peter  
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I & II Thessalonians  
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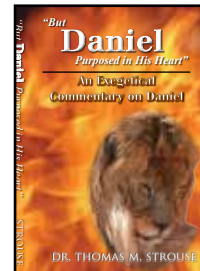
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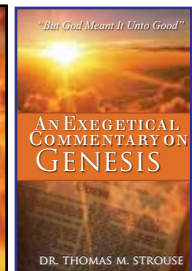
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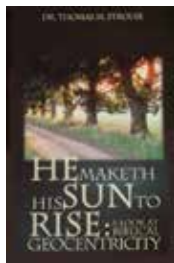
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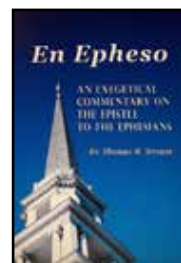
Daniel  
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Genesis  
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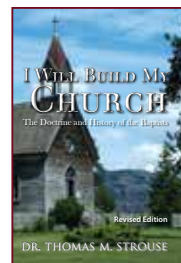
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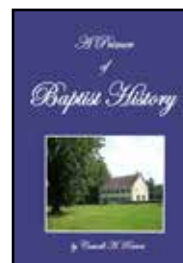
En Epheso  
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Jonah  
\$10.00



I Will Build My Church  
\$15.00



A Primer of Baptist History  
\$20.00



The Lord God Hath Spoken  
\$15.00

## BBC Fellowship



If you have any news for the next issue of the BBC Update, please send to the Editor, Cas Reeves, at either

bbts@stny.rr.com  
hbc5923@stny.rr.com



### Bible Baptist Theological Seminary

A ministry of Bible Baptist Church

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